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'I trusted this man implicitly' - patients reel over arrest of cancer doctor

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'It's still hard for me to believe,' Patricia Sullivan said of her doctor, Farid Fata, accused of unnecessary treatments. / Ryan Garza/Detroit Free Press



By **Zlati Meyer**
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Patricia Sullivan was diagnosed with acute anemia and began iron infusions approximately eight years ago. Sometimes, the 78-year-old Shelby Township woman went weekly, other times, two or three times a week.

At one point, her doctor changed her to a different type of iron, which caused her to develop cellulitis in both legs and a serious infection that landed her in the hospital more than once.

Now that her physician, [Dr. Farid Fata has been charged in a \\$35-million Medicare scheme](#) and accused of ordering unnecessary hematology and oncology treatments and misdiagnosing healthy people with cancer, Sullivan is reeling from the shock — and second-guessing her treatment.

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Oakland County cancer doctor accused of unnecessary treatments, defrauding Medicare of millions

"I always liked Dr. Fata. He had kind eyes," she said Wednesday, a day after Fata's arrest. "I couldn't believe it. Now, I'm worrying if I'm really that anemic. ... I'm totally shocked, because I trusted this man implicitly. I trusted the lab reports."

Fata owns and operates [Michigan Hematology Oncology Centers](#), with offices in Clarkston, Bloomfield Hills, Lapeer, Sterling Heights, Troy and Oak Park.

According to the federal complaint filed Tuesday, the hematologist oncologist, who lives in Oakland Township, is accused of administering treatments that patients didn't need, such as chemotherapy for cancer patients in remission and end-of-life patients, and purposely misdiagnosing patients with anemia, fatigue and other issues in order to rack up more treatment payments from Medicare.

Mike Delise suspects that might have been the case with his mother, who died of lung cancer in February 2005 at age 76. She started seeing Fata in October 2004, when he wanted to treat her with chemo and radiation within the same week.

"We had asked him what were her chances of being cured, and he told us 70%. She lasted 4 months. He literally killed her with all the stuff he did for her," Delise, 61, of Warren said. "She went through pure hell for four months."

Fata remains in federal custody pending a continuation of a hearing today in U.S. District Court. His attorney, Christopher Andreoff, denied the charges against Fata. He said he can't speak to individual diagnoses, because he hasn't yet seen the files.

"I'm concerned that the government has failed to produce any identifiable factors," he said. "I'm getting e-mails and calls that are nothing but complimentary of the doctor and their treatment at the facility."

The Michigan Hematology Oncology Centers are open and continuing to treat patients, he added.

Fata has one open allegation on file with the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, filed in November and under review by the Health Investigation Section, plus two closed allegations, said department spokeswoman Jeannie Vogel. Details were not available on any of the three cases.

Part of the pain patients and their families feel comes from a cultural myth that doctors are altruistic, said one expert.

"The trust that a professional is acting as a professional becomes a matter of survival," said Ann Mongoven, assistant professor at Michigan State University's Center for Ethics and Humanities in the Life Sciences. "That's why some might argue physicians have a special kind of obligation."